

Under Fire

By RICHARD PARKER

Based on the drama of
ROD COOPER MEGRUE

Author of "Under Cover" and co-author
of "It Pays to Advertise"

Copyright, 1914, by The Macmillan Company.

SYNOPSIS.

George Wagstaff, daughter of Sir George, of the British admiralty, hints at a liaison between her governess, Ethel Willoughby, and Henry Streetman. Ethel denies it. Henry Streetman calls on Ethel and while waiting for her talks to Brewster, Sir George's butler, who is a German spy, about his failure to get at admiralty papers in Sir George's possession. He phones to German secret service headquarters.

A fine young Englishwoman is caught in the net of international plotting and is made the victim of circumstances—tragic circumstances. She becomes innocently involved with an enemy of her country and he proceeds to use her as a tool. How she is cornered and prodded, as boys might tease a wounded wild animal, is told vividly in this installment.

Streetman, the German spy, and Roeder (alias Brewster, the butler), are discussing the possibility of war.

CHAPTER II—Continued.

"Yes, yes! Of course!" Streetman agreed hastily, as if he would forestall any patriotic exhibition. "Still, one would like to live with the luxuries of life. One day I shall make the grand coup; and then to cease all this—" He broke off suddenly, for he heard Miss Willoughby stirring on the other side of that closed door. "Sssh! To the door!"

"Very good, Brewster!" Mr. Streetman said in a clear, firm voice, which he intended to carry well beyond that closed door. "I'll wait here for Miss Willoughby."

And then Sir George's butler bowed and left the room.

CHAPTER III.

A Foe in the Household.

Brewster had hardly closed the doors behind him before Ethel Willoughby appeared.

"Oh, Henry! You surprised me," she said.

"I came before the others," Streetman explained, "because there is something you must do for me at once."

"About the fleet, I suppose," she said, somewhat wearily, as she turned away from him.

"How did you know?" He shot the question at her almost too quickly for caution. But for the moment he experienced something approaching alarm. But her answer reassured him.

"Nowadays it is only of the fleet you ask," she told him. And she regarded him with eyes that were pathetic, if not reproachful. Once it had seemed to her that Henry Streetman was interested in her. But of late she had been obliged to admit to herself that that interest had quickly waned.

Her handsome caller paid no attention to the obvious complaint that lay in Ethel's answer. In the most matter-of-fact fashion he proceeded straight to the business that was uppermost in his mind.

"You must learn at once from Sir George where the ships at Spithead are going," he announced bluntly. "Find out if they sail together, or if they will disperse—and how."

As she faced him again there was beseeching in her voice, her eyes, her whole manner.

"Wait, Henry, wait!" she begged. "Before we go into that, tell me—when are you going to let people know we're married?"

Streetman remembered then that he had a many-sided role to play. And thereupon he went up to the girl and taking one of Ethel's hands in his, while he put an arm around her, he looked down at her in a most loverlike fashion.

"Ah, my dear! I'd let them know now—this minute—if I only could!" he exclaimed.

"But we must announce our marriage at once," she said quickly.

"Announce our marriage—why?"

"George Wagstaff told me just a few minutes ago that when I said I was in Brighton a friend of hers saw you and me together in Paris," she replied in tragic tones.

"You did not explain?" he asked.

"That we were on our honeymoon? No! I kept my word to you. I said I was in Brighton." She looked at him in a puzzled way as he left her then and paced the floor in a nervous fashion.

"Of course, it's easily proved that I was not in Brighton," Ethel continued. "George seemed to think you and I . . . Well—you can imagine what she must have thought. Oh! why must there be this secrecy? I loathe it!"

She sank upon the settee and stared moodily at the floor—a most unhappy picture of a pretty bride.

Streetman roused himself and bent over her.

"My dear! We must wait until I can arrange matters with my family."

he explained in his most plausible manner. "Until I can come into my own again we should starve. Soon it will all be arranged." And once more he turned away from her—this time with an air of finality—as if there were really no argument against his vague protestations.

"Soon? You have said that for a month," Ethel reminded him. "You've said it ever since we were married." "Next week, then!" he agreed in desperation. "I promise! And you will learn tonight about the fleet?" he added in the same breath.

"But, Henry, if I do ask Sir George and he tells me, isn't it rather a shabby thing to do then to come to you and—"

"No, no, no—as I've often told you!" he interrupted. It seemed to him that her objections were interminable. And under the stress of the urging from his superiors his forbearance was fast reaching its end. To hide his anxiety and his irritation, he stepped to the window and looked out.

"But Sir George trusts me," Ethel resumed. Streetman stifled a mouth-filling German oath while he listened to her. "When he answers my questions," she continued, "he does so because he thinks I'm just idly curious. He never dreams I'd repeat what he says to anyone. It all puts me in a beastly position. Sir George is a loyal Englishman, and if he thought—"

Streetman would not let her finish. He wheeled about and said sharply, to forestall even the merest mention of such a thing as an informer—let alone a spy—

"And you are a loyal Englishwoman—and I am loyal to France."

"Then why do you pass yourself off as an Englishman?"

"Because it is the wish of my employers, the French secret service. It is the wish of France," he declared in a grand manner, which he intended to carry conviction with it.

"It's all quite beyond me," she said with a hopeless air. They had had many such discussions. And never yet had she been able to understand the reasons that Streetman put forth with unvarying glibness. "Why should France wish to know about the fleet?"

"Ah! that I do not know," he replied. "The secret service gives me their instructions. It is for me to follow, not to question them. It is my work—my future." He drew nearer to her, and his masterful eyes gazed full into hers. "It is our future, Ethel!" he cried with apparent emotion.

"But isn't France England's ally?" she asked. "I can't understand why she should need this information."

"In times like these it is best for each country to know all possible about every country," he explained. "You will be doing no wrong to England when you get me the facts I desire." He sat down beside her, and placing his arm about her, he drew her close to him. "You will find out tonight about the fleet?" he pleaded.

But there was something about his persistent wheedling that made Ethel Willoughby—or Mrs. Streetman—suspicious.

"I can't help feeling that there is something behind all this—something you are not telling me," she said slowly.

Despite his confident air, Streetman could not easily look into her searching eyes. He was uncomfortable.

"No! All That Is Over," She Said.

And he rose abruptly and took a few quick, restless steps about the room.

"Why—what an imagination!" he exclaimed, forcing a laugh at last.

"Really, Ethel, you're quite absurd!"

"But always, before we were married, you were so kind, so thoughtful. You talked only of pretty things. But now, always it is the fleet—the navy. You seem interested only in their plans, their secrets. . . . Is it for that you married me?"

Streetman's patience had reached the breaking point. And at the question he flew into a sudden rage. He turned a face like a thundercloud upon her.

"And on my side I ask why you married me? For love? . . . I think not!" he sneered.

His quick anger brought Ethel to her feet.

"But, Henry—"

He waved her answer aside as if it were not worth his listening to.

"Once, perhaps, I thought so," he said, talking her down like a common brawler. "But now I hear it was another man whom you really loved—a young Irishman who went away

without doing you the honor of asking you to marry him." In his words there was, as he intended there should be, a taint that implied more than he actually said.

"No, no!" Ethel cried. "It isn't true. It was just a flirtation—a few dances—a theater or two!"

"Oh! That was all!" he retorted. "And yet they told me you had known him all your life!"

"I don't know whom you're talking about," she said in desperation.

"Nor do I," he rejoined. "It was some man in the army—a captain, I think. I do not know his name; but I shall find it out, and then perhaps I shall learn if you cared for me at all or if it was just that I caught you on the rebound."

"What do you mean?" She faced him tensely. Such scenes were new to her. Trouble, of a sort, she had known. But never anything like this. It had been hard enough to see her resources dwindling steadily, without the means of replenishing them, and with actual penury staring her in the face. But now Ethel knew that that was as nothing compared with the situation in which she had unwittingly placed herself. To be tied for life to a man who did not love her—who seemed an absolute brute—that was worse, a thousand times, than any mere financial difficulties.

Streetman did not at once reply to her. For a few moments he regarded her balefully, as if she were already a hateful thing in his eyes.

"I wonder, my dear," he said at last. "I wonder if today it is only I that count with you or if you have—memories. . . . We shall see."

"No, no, Henry!" she protested. "I'm—very fond of you," she said brokenly.

"Fond?" The smile that he gave her was nothing if not cruel. "Come, then! Kiss me!" And he attempted to embrace her. But she pushed him away from her.

"No! All that is over. Not until we can let people know. This secrecy makes me feel as if I were not your wife. What George said is enough to make me believe, almost, that it has all been just some horrible intrigue."

"Nonsense; nonsense!" he scoffed. "If I promise you now that next week we make our marriage public, will you believe me?"

"Yes, Henry! I will!" she said in a voice in which there rang renewed hope.

He stepped quickly to her side again. Henry Streetman was not the sort of man to miss any opportunity that offered.

"But to do that," he stipulated, "I must secure for France this information concerning the fleet. That will mean promotion for me—money—much money! And with that I need no longer wait on my family. You understand?" he asked her.

"Yes, Henry! I do!"

"Good! That's settled. And you will take the first opportunity to speak to Sir George?" He was filled with elation at the happy turn of affairs. But he was doomed to quick disappointment. "You will?" he persisted.

"No!"

"What?" he exclaimed, scarcely believing his ears.

"I understand that for some reason you are trying to bribe me with these promises of yours to betray Sir George's confidence. But I'm sick of this deception. I won't do it any longer; and you oughtn't to ask it of me."

"Indeed!" he said, with a vicious show of scorn. "And if it should happen to come to Sir George anonymously?"—he stressed the word—"that you had already betrayed his confidence, what would your position be here?"

He watched her narrowly, to see what effect his threat might have upon her.

"You wouldn't do that?" she exclaimed, as a sudden fear gripped her. All at once it struck Ethel that her position had indeed become desperate. She had not dreamed that she would find herself in such an impasse—and at the hands of her husband, of all people.

"I should not like to do it," Streetman replied. "But I intend to learn—I shall learn—about the fleet tonight; and through you!" he declared, with undisguised determination.

She turned upon him like some hunted wild thing then, ready to fight desperately in one last, mad effort.

"Oh! So that's what your love, your affection, amounts to, is it?"

"Put it any way you choose," was his callous answer. "But I must have this information. . . . Come! What do you say?"

"What is there for me to say?"

"Exactly!" he retorted. "I am glad to see that at last you appreciate the situation." They both started then at the sound of voices. "It is Sir George," Streetman said. "I shall leave presently. But I shall come back in an hour. . . . And you will have found out about the fleet?"

"Oh! I suppose so!" she replied. "But it makes me hate myself—and you!"

"Really? What a pity!" he said with mock sympathy.

CHAPTER IV.

Gathering Storm-Clouds.

And then Sir George Wagstaff joined them, with his trusted butler, Brewster, in his wake, bearing a muffin tray.

Ethel went gayly to meet her benefactor. At least, her manner was blithesome; but her heart was leaden.

"Hello, Sir George!" she said.

"Hello, Ethel!" They were good pals—those two. The daughter of one of his oldest and dearest friends, Ethel had always occupied a niche all her own in Sir George's affections. Sir George was not of the big type

of Englishman. He was, on the contrary, not much over the height of Ethel herself. But he was undeniably impressive, with his keen, gray eyes, his fast-whitening hair, and his exquisite manners. And despite the punctilious politeness that Sir George displayed to everybody, there was something in his bearing that warned one that he was no person to trifle with.

"I just dropped in for a few minutes because I'd promised to come to your tea, Ethel; and I try never to break my word to so charming a lady."

She made a pretty curtsy. "Thank you, Sir George!"

"For you, at the admiralty, these must be troublous times?" Streetman ventured.

"Rather busy, yes," was Sir George's somewhat short answer. He was always ready, when at leisure, to enter



"You Think, Then, There Will Be War Between Russia and Germany?"

upon a discussion of any topic—except such as touched upon his high office. And there he was exceedingly touchy.

"You think, then, there will be war between Russia and Germany?" Streetman asked him eagerly. He could not do otherwise than ignore Sir George's slightly frigid reply to his previous question. If he felt any resentment, he trusted to be able to pay off the score in his own way, later.

Sir George lifted his eyebrows ever so slightly as he glanced at Ethel's caller.

"That, sir, is a matter I should prefer not to discuss," he replied.

"Pardon me, sir, but as a loyal Englishman I am naturally interested."

And then Ethel stationed herself behind the tea table.

"Come! Let's talk of peace and tea," she said. It made her feel guilty to sit there and hear Streetman try to pry information out of Sir George beneath his own roof. And it seemed that the least she could do to repay him for his many kindnesses was to protect him as best she might from Streetman's indefatigable curiosity.

They had no sooner taken their cups from her when George Wagstaff burst into the room.

"Hello, everybody!" she greeted them. "Here's Guy and his mother." Close behind her followed Mrs. Stephen Falconer and her good-looking son, who was, as everybody knew, more than devoted to Sir George Wagstaff's vivacious daughter. "We've been here earlier," George explained, "but Mrs. Falconer and Guy had gone to a matinee."

"Silly show!" the blase Guy added in a bored drawl. "The eternal triangle or some such nonsense!"

"Very tiresome!" his mother agreed. "And so noisy! Full of shots and pistols—and mostly about some poor creature who'd sinned and repented."

"That's the sort of play I disapprove of, particularly for my daughter," Sir George commented from his place on the settee. "I am glad, George, that you were not there."

"Oh, I saw it last week," said George with mischievous satisfaction. "And you ought to go, father. You'd weep over the heroine. Frightfully damaged lady—wasn't she, Guy?"

"Oh, frightfully!" said Guy. "Completely beyond repair!"

"I knew the minute she walked on she wasn't a good woman. She was so pale and circle-y, and so beautifully dressed," George explained, as she watched her father squirm. Shocking her respectable parent was one of George's favorite diversions.

"You mustn't talk this silly cynicism," Ethel reproved the two young people.

"Don't worry!" George retorted. "Father knows I don't get that sort of chat from my very proper governess. It's just hereditary from him. I express what he feels but doesn't dare say."

But Sir George refused to be annoyed by his daughter's bickering. "At least I deserve credit for my modesty," he observed dryly.

Will Ethel get the damaging naval information from Sir George—and will she refuse to pass it along? Or will Sir George, suddenly suspicious of unexplained actions, refuse to talk to the girl?

LIFE A BLESSING

Best Gift of God, a Period of Highest Possibilities, as They May Be Used.

It had been good for that man if he had not been born.—Matthew 26:24.

This startling statement was made by Christ concerning Judas. We cannot doubt the correctness of our Lord's judgment. It was on the last night when the disciples were gathered in the upper room, and Jesus had been speaking of his betrayal, and he had told the disciples that one of them was a traitor. One after another asked, "Lord, is it I?" a striking proof of the fact every man of them had learned to distrust himself and had realized the inherent wickedness of the human heart.

But it is not of that incident in the upper room that I wish to speak, but of that remarkable statement of our Lord, and the inevitable question which it thrusts upon us. Can it be said of a human life that it would have been better if it had never been?

Men have said that of themselves. In some deep affliction, in some spasm of pain, in some deep depression of soul, men have cursed the day of their birth. Many a life seems to us to be a doubtful blessing, and some a positive evil. Many a person has longed for death to get away from the troubles of life, real and imaginary. Overworn and over-weary souls have sighed for the rest of the grave, "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." But note that there is a vast difference between longing for that rest, and a desire that one had never lived. I have known many a person who was glad to depart this life, even as a man is glad to get home after a long and a heavy day's work, glad of the rest and of the hours of sleep. But that man is also glad that he has lived through the day and done a man's work. A good man, who has made much of life and fought the good fight manfully, may yet be willing to lay down his arms. It seems to me that the natural fruit of the best life is to be ready for the harvest. Age should bring a mellow ripeness to which all the world's suns and summers could add nothing.

Paul's Desire for Rest.

Paul, who had filled up his life with great deeds and great thoughts, when he saw death approaching, was willing to remain for the work's sake, but he desired to depart and be with Jesus. It is only the weak and cowardly who desire to end life in order to escape its duties and responsibilities.

Still the question is insistent, Is life a blessing? or were it better for a man that he had never been born? Here is our Lord's deliberate judgment concerning a man who was a disciple, a man of some aspirations. And if we observe life about us, and see the misshapen, worthless, wicked and wrecked lives of men, perhaps we would agree concerning many of them that it had been better if they had never been born. Some time ago I heard a speaker pass that judgment concerning the children of the city slums, who are born to little chance of anything that is true and pure and beautiful in life.

But I am not ready to pass that judgment, for out of those conditions I have seen come to flower some of the finest manhood of God's kingdom. Life is judged according to the opportunities and the talents given us, and what we make of them. Let the Lord Jesus Christ judge; but to us let every life be a good gift of God, a life of possibilities, a potential blessing.

Despair Always Wrong.

I have known good people who despaired of their own life. They considered it futile, worthless, not a blessing. The reason back of that is usually lack of faith in God. He said: "Let the day perish wherein I was born." He had a happy and prosperous life, and then misfortune overtook him. He lost all that he had, and even his children, and he himself was badly affected. Does it seem like pettish irritation that he wishes that he had never been born? That is to misread the story. It was not his personal misfortune which made him despair, but the fact that he was losing his faith in God and his fatherhood. For Job to lose that was to lose everything. It seemed that the whole fabric of the universe was crumbling about him, and he sitting in misery among the ruins. And is it not still true of men, that when they lose their faith in God they lose their faith in human life? Life becomes an intolerable burden when God is left out.

Is life a blessing? It depends on how you use it. You may have had no success and little sunshine; you may have nothing to show for all your effort; you may have known pain and tasted sorrow, and yet life has been eminently worth living; and when the summons comes, you pass out laden with the treasures that pass current in heaven. If for you the joy of life is gone, its duties remain, and its opportunities for service. And even though to others your life may seem of little account, to Jesus Christ it is so precious that he gave himself a sacrifice, that your life might be saved.—Pennsylvania Grit.

Overcoming Weakness.

There is no surer remedy for desponding weakness than, when we have done our own parts, to commit all cheerfully, for the rest, to the good pleasure of heaven.—R. L'Estrange.

A word of cheer is ever more encouraging than a word of censure.

NEW COMMITTEE IS NAMED IN NASHVILLE

DEMOCRATIC STATE COMMITTEE
SELECTS THREE MEMBERS
FOR THOSE RESIGNED.

WILL ACCEPT CAVALRY TROOP

Notice Received That War Department at Washington Is Ready To Muster Into Service Recently Organized at Knoxville.

—Nashville.

At a meeting of the Democratic state executive committee, held here, three members of the campaign committee appointed by the state committee several weeks ago resigned and three friends of Gov. Tom C. Rye were elected. Those three men are Thad A. Cox or Johnson City, Mann Wills of Brownsville and R. E. L. Bynum of Jackson. Mr. Cox is to be vice chairman, Mr. Wills to be treasurer and Mr. Bynum assistant secretary.

L. D. Hill, chairman, and J. D. Jacobs, secretary of the state committee, are the other two members of the campaign committee. Mr. Cox, the vice chairman, is to have authority equal to Chairman Hill.

The meeting of the committee was harmonious in all respects and not a disagreement occurred. After the new campaign committee had been chosen Gov. Rye and Congressman McKellar met with members and talked over the plans of campaign.

Hon. A. L. Stewart of Franklin county was chosen elector to take the place of George E. Banks of the Third district, who resigned on account of ill health.

The communication from the Republican state committee asking for a joint debate for Hooper and McKellar was referred to the campaign committee with power to act.

Will Accept Cavalry.

Capt. C. F. Cox, on detail with the Tennessee troops, received notice from the war department that they were ready to accept the troop of cavalry recently organized at Knoxville. The troop will be mustered into service at once by Capt. Cox and will be sent either to Camp Tom Rye or to Fort Oglethorpe.

Capt. Cox also stated that he had received another supply of equipment for the Tennessee troops and that he thought this would be sufficient to place all units in proper condition for border service.

To Make Test Case.

Thirteen members of the county court who have relatives elected to positions as teachers in the Davidson county schools have agreed to test the question of their eligibility, and an agreed suit will be filed in the chancery court.

County Attorney T. J. McMorrough has held that members of the county board of education are ineligible to retain their positions in the schools.

Newport Asks New Depot.

The petition of the citizens of Newport for a new railroad depot at that city will be heard by the Tennessee railroad commission Sept. 12. The petition has been in the hands of the commission for several days, and the hearing was set for that date.

Forced Into Bankruptcy.

Some of the creditors of the brokerage house of John T. Landis & Co., declared insolvent a week ago, following the disappearance of the board room manager, J. Roy Boone, objected to the proposed trusteeship and an involuntary petition in bankruptcy was filed in the federal court. The listed assets approximate \$25,000, while the liabilities amount to \$90,000.

Weather and Crop Summary.

The Tennessee section of the Climatological Service of the U. S. Weather Bureau issues a summary of weather and crop conditions in Tennessee, as follows:

The temperature averaged decidedly above the normal for the week. Very little rain fell in some parts of the western section, but over much the greater part of the state there were showers that afforded sufficient moisture.

Except in the few dry spots, the conditions were favorable for all growing and maturing crops.

The general outlook for corn, cotton, tobacco, sweet potatoes and peanuts continues very good.